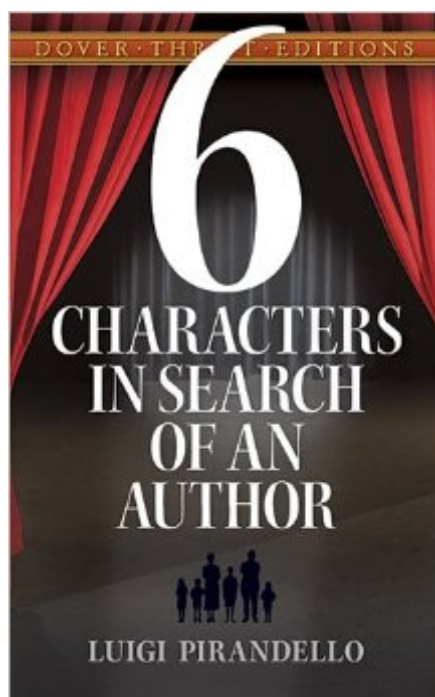


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Six Characters In Search Of An Author (Dover Thrift Editions)



Synopsis

One of the major figures of modern theater, Luigi Pirandello (1867–1936) wrote dramas and satires that sparked controversy with their radical departures from conventional theatrical techniques. His most celebrated work, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, embodies the Nobel Prize-winning playwright's innovations by presenting an open-ended drama on a stage without sets. First performed in 1923, this intellectual comedy introduces six individuals to a stage where a company of actors has assembled for a rehearsal. Claiming to be the incomplete, unused creations of an author's imagination, they demand lines for a story that will explain the details of their lives. In ensuing scenes, these "real-life characters," all professing to be part of an extended family, produce a drama of sorts punctuated by disagreements, interruptions, and arguments. In the end they are dismissed by the irate manager, their dilemma unsolved and the "truth" a matter of individual viewpoints. A tour de force exploring the many faces of reality, this classic is now available in an inexpensive edition that will be welcomed by amateur theatrical groups as well as students of drama.

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Customer Reviews

Luigi Pirandello's 1921 play "Six Characters in Search of an Author" ("Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore") has the deserved reputation of being the first existentialist drama and having a profound effect on later playwrights, especially those practitioners of the Theater of the Absurd such as Samuel Beckett ("Waiting for Godot"), Eugene Ionesco ("Rhinoceros"), and Jean Genet ("The

Maids"). Pirandello's writing often focuses on elements of madness, illusion and isolation, all of which are inspired by the tragic aspects of his personal life in which his wife went insane and his daughter tried to commit suicide. In 1921 during a five week period Pirandello wrote his two acknowledged masterpieces, "Six Characters in Search of an Author" and "Henry IV." While "Six Characters" was successful when it opened in Rome it was also considered scandalous. However, it soon being performed in Milan, London, New York, and Germany. Because of his great influence on modern theater, Pirandello was awarded the Noble Prize for Literature in 1934. Two years later, while in negotiations to appear in a film version of "Six Characters," he died. The setting for "Six Characters in Search of an Author" is a rehearsal for a play (By Pirandello) that is interrupted by the arrival of six characters. Their leader, the father, tells the manager that they are looking for an author. It seems that the author who created them never finished their story and they are unrealized characters who have not yet been fully brought to life. The father insists that they are not real people but characters, and the manager and his cast can only laugh at the idea. But then they become intrigued by the bits and pieces of the story the six characters have to tell.

Luigi Pirandello kicked theatre convention out the door with "Six Characters in Search of an Author." Illusion and reality get a bit bent out of shape, as fictional characters stroll about and converse with managers and actors. It's a brilliant piece of existentialist work, and one that had a distinct effect on theatre after that. It opens with several unnamed theatre people -- the Manager, the Leading Man, the Prompter -- rehearsing a play in an empty theatre. "During this manoeuvre, the Six CHARACTERS enter, and stop by the door at back of stage," Pirandello tells us: a florid Father, timid Mother, equally timid Boy, arrogant Son, sexy Step-Daughter and too-young-to-have-much-personality Child. "As a matter of fact . . . we have come here in search of an author . . ." the Father tells the manager. The characters have been abandoned by their author, who "no longer wished, or was no longer able" to put them into a story. And now they want the theatre company to provide them with a vehicle that will make them immortal -- and they have to convince the Manager that they are worthy. Pirandello dispels the unreality of the play with "Oh sir, you know well that life is full of infinite absurdities, which, strangely enough, do not even need to appear plausible, since they are true." While the events of this play seems to be sort of gimmicky, Pirandello uses them with unusual grace (and not a few moments of bizarre comedy). The characterizations are among the weirdest I've ever seen -- we have an entire family drama going on without a play/novel/film for it. Lovers, illegitimate kids, sibling rivalry and marital fights. Ironically, the Character family overshadows the "real" people on the stage.

There are few works I have read that match the greatness of this work. As it progresses ,it starts opening up new chapters in the realm of complex human behavior for the reader to explore. To me it looks as if it is really a case of who understands whom? The stepdaughter blames her father for all her misfortunes who in turn blames her mother who he says left her for another man. Its none of the fault of the mother either who fell in love with a man who, she says, was introduced to her by none other than the father himself.(her falling in love is nothing but natural and still she feels that she would have remained with her husband had she not been driven out of the house.).The son is not attached to any body because he had a non attached upbringing. The step daughter being a victim of prostitution hates her father who being lonely and forced by the carnal needs (which is again but natural) visits brothel .It is by coincidence that he happens to seduce his own daughter which is a very important link in the story(here also, the father is remorseful but insists that he should not be branded evil just because of one aberration which he feels are present in other humans also.) . The boy always feels lonely and alien because he is despised by the son for being illegitimate which is not his fault. His blank stare and ultimately his committing suicide are all tragic expressions of the fact that the child must have felt extremely lonely and punished for a crime which he did not commit.

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